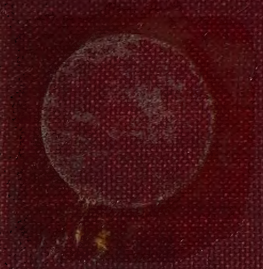
THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

EDWARD SCRIBNER AMES



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THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

BY

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The Bethany Press
The New Christian Century Company
700 E. Fortieth Street,
Chicago

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Foreword

The sermons which are here brought together were preached and separately printed at different times during the past seven years. Requests for them continue and have been the occasion of the appearance of this little book. Interest in the central theme is increasing as the constructive tendency of modern thought is more widely understood. It is earnestly hoped that these pages may contribute in some slight measure to the deepening of religious faith in the presence of the fullest knowledge.

The sympathetic understanding and generous co-operation of the local church through the eleven years of the present pastorate are evidenced by the fact that the church authorizes this publication.

Edward Scribner Ames.

Hyde Park, Chicago.

November, 1911.

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"I myself;" Jesus answered, "am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one ever comes to the Father except through me. If you had recognized me, you would have known my Father too; for the future, however, you will recognize him; indeed you have already seen him."

"Master, show us the Father," said Philip, "and we shall be satisfied."

"Have I been all this time among you," Jesus said, "and yet you, Philip, have not recognized me? Those who have seen me have seen the Father, so how can you still say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in union with the Father, and the Father with me? The truths which I tell you are not given on my own authority; but it is the Father who being always in union with me, is doing these things himself. Believe me," he said to them all, "when I say that I am in union with the Father and the Father with me, or else believe me on account of these very things which you see."

St. John 14:6-11.

I.

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

"Christianity is founded upon Jesus Christ." It sprang from his personality, derived its vital conception from his words and its inspiration from his vision and example. The church arose as the company of those who were won to him, to his ideals and to his way of service toward God and man. The test of loyalty was the disposition to follow him in doing the will of the Father. That was what the word "belief" meant in New Testament times. Belief is conviction which controls action. Therefore to believe in Jesus meant to imitate his example, to enter into sympathy with his purposes, to co-operate with him in establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth. The confession that Jesus is the Son of God was the favorite formula for the expression of this practical faith in him. It signified that his disciples were convinced that he knew and declared God's will, that his supreme am-

bition was to do it, and that he could be trusted to lead them in the divine life. His own appeal was ever to the heart and will of his hearers. He sought to enlist them for active service. "Follow me"—not praise me, nor patronize me, nor worship me—was the form of his call, and its illustration was the parable of the Good Samaritan, together with many other parables and deeds bearing the same object-lesson of love and devotion. His one unconditional test of discipleship was the fashioning of daily life, in word and act, by the spiritual standards of the kingdom of heaven. This test was expressed in many ways. It involved the control of appetite, the subordination of pleasure, the denial of the lower self in all its forms. To make that clear Jesus said, "Except a man take up his cross and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." If the hand or eye hindered the attainment of the highest life, it must be cut off or plucked out. The cunning and sensuous things must be subjected to the serious, earnest work of righteousness. With reference to other

problems of conduct this one test of discipleship became a call to repent, to be faithful, to bear fruit, or to love one's neighbor. Always it was practical, intended to fashion character, to give the right bent to the will.

Belief in Jesus, in his sonship to God, was just another form of this test. He explicitly declared that the ascription to him of mere titles meant nothing except as they who employed them were trying to live the kind of life he enjoined. He preferred to be acknowledged by deeds rather than by words. Evidently there were people in his day who never understood this. They repeated their creed, they declared their belief in his Lordship and yet were disowned by Christ. It is not recorded that they were viciously bad men. They probably were very respectable, judging by the social and religious standards of their time, but they did not take to heart the teaching of Christ, nor make it the inspiring, energizing law of their lives. No one so excited the burning indignation of Jesus as these pious,

easy-going religionists, who professed faith in him with their lips, but in their daily lives denied him by their complacent self-righteousness and by their self-deceiving orthodoxy. In a vivid, imaginative picture Jesus portrayed them. Some of them were preachers. "Have we not prophesied in thy name?" they said. Some of them were even workers of miracles. "Have we not in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" they said. To them all Jesus replied, "I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."

In the same spirit the apostles of Christ were always anxious concerning the daily lives of their converts. Their loyalty to the Master was measured by their sobriety, chastity, honesty, industry in business, liberality toward the poor, and in the support of the gospel. Christ was confessed or denied in the relations of husband and wife, of parent and child, of

master and servant, of friend and neighbor. By the whole message and example of Jesus and his apostles, it is made emphatic that faith is shown more by the care of the hungry and thirsty, of the stranger and naked, of the sick and imprisoned,—that is by a vigorous and abundant life of righteousness, than by any verbal declaration of his divinity. What a man really thinks about Christ is therefore to be judged by his daily life, its tone and ideals, its degree of generous, whole-hearted devotion to the things which are true and pure and lovely and of good report.

The loss or obscuration of this active, practical element in the conception of Christian faith has led to radically erroneous estimates of the place of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. Frequently more concern is shown regarding the theoretical correctness of a man's ideas about Christ than about the actual influence of Christ in the man's life. It is as though one asserted that the main condition of bodily life were to understand the nature

of food rather than to eat it. To be sure men are constantly investigating their food, as well as their religious faith, and they are justified in doing both with all the aid which experience and science can afford; but the specialists in dietetics, unlike the theologians, have never yet attempted to withhold all food from those who would not or could not accept their definitions of it. The thing of first importance in religion is to endeavor to live by the truth and the love which Jesus Christ displayed. By means of the deepening experience which that involves one grows in knowledge and appreciation of Christ himself. How clearly his own words declare this practical and volitional character of his religion when in answer to those who were raising this very question as to his nature he said: "If any one has the will to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching is from God, or whether I speak on my own authority."

The peculiar position and emphasis which the doctrine of the divinity of Christ has come to have in the whole body of

church teaching and practice has not always made obvious what is the central message of Jesus, namely, the Fatherhood of God. Another method of approach might succeed better. Theologians are constantly plying us with sermons and arguments to prove the divinity of Christ, but the great aim of Jesus was to bring men to believe in the justice and mercy and love of God the heavenly Father. It is common to assume the nature of God, and then to show that Jesus Christ is his son, but the opposite course may be more historical, more scriptural and more reasonable. The life of Christ is the given factor in the equation, and from it is to be discovered what kind of a being God is. To reverse this statement of the problem fills it with all kinds of impossibilities, for then we demand an explanation of the nature of Christ in terms of the being of God, when it is the fundamental principle of the Christian religion that the revelation of God is given through Jesus Christ himself. It is as though a traveler were to come to us from a remote and ideal

country, and in many ways teach us about its people, its laws and his father, the king, presenting himself all the while as the best proof and illustration of the things he told. "And," he might say, "those who believe me and observe my precepts shall surely enter that land some day in great joy and victory; and moreover, during all their days here they shall be wiser and better, more useful and more contented than by any other way of life." Then suppose that, instead of using his words and his beautiful life to fill out in our thought the ever growing conception of that country and its king, and instead of seeking to live in the light of that vision, we should turn about and very ingeniously busy ourselves trying to prove whether the messenger really was a true representative of the land from which he came and in very fact the son of the king himself.

In other words the reasonable and the satisfying thing is to believe, and to act upon the belief, that God is as good and as gracious as Jesus Christ. What a real and vital foundation that gives to our

faith in the world and in the cause of righteousness. Thinking men are in reality more troubled today about the character of God than they are about the nature of Jesus. Even Renan and Strauss and others who have been counted the enemies of Christianity have paid the highest tributes to the moral character, the religious insight and the uplifting influence of Jesus. And in the end their whole contention ministers profoundly to faith in God and the world; for if, as they assert, Jesus was a man, to be accounted for by the natural processes of his racial inheritance and education, sprung in every element of his being from the bosom of the earth and from the air he breathed, then they have only infinitely enhanced what they call "nature" by attributing to it the production of the personality which they admit he possessed. It is inspiring to believe that those spiritual qualities belong to the world itself. To be convinced that the stars in their courses, and the tides of human history are guided by the same love of the truth, the same tender concern

for human souls and the same indignation against all forms of evil and injustice, as are found in the pure heart of Jesus—this is to possess the highest form of religious faith. It teaches patience in the long, fierce conflict with sin. It fills the faltering heart with courage. It compensates for the self-denial and humiliation which every man experiences in his pursuit of the true and the good. This conviction that the essential realities for the infinite, eternal God are what they were for Christ himself—what measureless strength it gives to him who consciously devotes himself to the same ideals, to the service of his fellowman, and to the moral progress and illumination of the race. One who gains this insight into the spiritual quality of the world is armored against all temptations of mere sensuous pleasure, or wealth or popular applause, and against all reverses of fortune. He goes eagerly to his daily task, whatever it may be, if he feels that his purposes and methods make him a co-worker together with God, the God who is truly the Father of Jesus

Christ.

Now it is important to realize how the nature of Christ may be used as the means for understanding God. No one would think of starting from the physical body of Jesus, and yet in the usual arguments for proving that Christ is divine, the physical processes of conception and birth have great prominence. If Christ's sonship to God rested upon these things, we would be led to think of God in terms of the bodily traits of Jesus. It is not many centuries since something like that was the prevalent idea of God. He was a great being, of gigantic form, seated on a huge throne up in the sky, ruling the universe after the manner of a mighty king. But Jesus himself expressly declared that God is Spirit, and his nearest disciple asserted that God is love. If therefore, the personality of Christ is to be taken in any sense as the revelation of God, it must in all reason be the moral and spiritual nature of Jesus. The conspicuous quality of his character was love, and that may serve to illustrate how the life of God

may be interpreted through Christ.

Before the time of Jesus the term God signified for the mass of men a local or a national deity. The sympathies and interests of Jesus, however, extended far beyond his own race. He entered into the minds of men of other races too and spoke in a new way of "the world" of men and women. Neither did he lack sympathy for any social class. The rich and poor were alike to him. He mingled freely with all sorts of men, sinners and menials, as well as the righteous and the great. More than this, he loved all these races and classes with a wonderful intensity. Among their sick and blind and deaf and crippled ones he moved with cheer and blessing. He seemed never annoyed by their insistence nor resentful at their ingratitude and selfishness. His love even went out to those who stood in his way, opposed his plans, sought his life and at last crucified him like a common thief. It was in that dark hour of human sin and ignorance that the light of Christ's love shone out with revealing glory.

There upon the cross they had erected he was solicitous for his enemies, as well as for the gentle mother who had followed him all his days with yearning care. The world never really knew before what love was, and never has since produced a scene of equal power and charm over the human heart. In that hour it was first shown with convincing proof that love could abolish the hatred of races, the pride of social castes, the self-righteousness of virtue and overcome the bitterest enmities and cruelties. In that love of Christ men first began to realize the possibility of a universal love for the world on the part of an infinite God. If Jesus, a man of flesh and blood like us, could by an all-inclusive love rise above the distinctions and differences which exist between men, how surely must the Power which gave him being be no respecter of persons, but the tender Keeper of all the children of men. John, the beloved disciple, was quick to draw this inference. He had penetrated deep into the heart of Jesus. He had companied with the Master in

trials, in temptations, in defeat, in the presence of the multitudes, and in the solitude of the mountains and through it all it was the enveloping love of Christ, a pillar of fire by night and a cloud of glory by day, which led him on. This love remained to John the most vivid memory of Jesus forty years after Calvary. It is the key-word of all his records of Christ, and it is the word through which he explains the nature of God. "God is love," he wrote, "and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

It is this spiritual sonship of Jesus to God that is the really important thing. Mere physical sonship, however unique or miraculous, would not be the guarantee of a mind and will in harmony with God. It was the voluntary choice to do his Father's will which really proved Christ to be divine. Nothing but this inner self surrender of every lesser thing in order to give himself wholly to the purposes of the divine will, could surely establish his oneness with God. And this claim to divinity squares itself with the profoundest con-

ceptions of morality and religion. For in a world of truth and goodness, where the name of the Infinite signifies wisdom and love and holy will, any participation in the nature of God must involve the presence of these supreme spiritual qualities. It is in this way that Jesus Christ is recognized as the Son of God, not by accident, nor by the contravention of law, but by the perceptible and conscious unfolding within him of a spirit sublime enough to be the revelation of the spiritual nature of the world. This view gains inspiring confirmation in the fact that the possession of the divine life is not limited to himself alone, but is the privilege of all men who will enter upon the Christ-like life themselves. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "Every one that loveth is born of God." In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus exhorted his hearers to love and to do good that they might be the children of their Father in heaven. In this conception the world presents itself as a spiritual reality of law and order where Christ is exalted by

nothing arbitrary or capricious, but only by the operation of those eternal forces of righteousness and love, through which he seeks to redeem all mankind.

The familiar arguments for the divinity of Christ do not produce the same conviction they once did. This is not due to loss of appreciation of Christ, for that has grown marvelously in recent years. The inadequacy of those arguments is accounted for by the fact that they belong to a different type of thought. They are essentially scholastic and deductive, rather than experimental and ethical. For instance, the doctrine of the Trinity rests upon certain metaphysical conceptions of substance and essence, of causation and pure being, terms which have only historical significance for modern minds. The present study of Jesus is psychological and sociological. The inquiry now is not so much how he came into being, but what was his actual life among men, what were his thoughts, his feelings, his volitions. Evidences of his nature are sought less among the prophets who preceded

him, and more among the saints who have followed him. Things are judged today by their effects rather than by their causes. It is what a man does that determines his value, just as it is the action of electricity rather than the means by which it is produced that indicates its nature. The words and deeds and influence of Christ are therefore the subjects of greatest interest in the church today. These are actual facts of history and are accessible to the strictest scientific investigation. They stand upon their own truth and moral power. Never were his sayings and his work submitted to such close scrutiny as at the present time. Friends and foes have contended over them point by point, and yet they remain before the sharpest criticism, the highest moral teaching and the finest examples of spiritual faith and courage which the world has seen. They are therefore norms and standards for our ideas of God, of duty and of destiny. Happy are we to have had that marvelous man born as one of our own race, bone of our bone and flesh of our

flesh; and happy indeed are we if we believe that God is his Father, full of the same grace and truth. To this historical Jesus, as to the fountain head, men have returned and will return, generation after generation, for ideals, for comfort and for strength. The waters of that fountain never waste away nor lose their power. They have gathered volume as they have run through the centuries until the Christian religion has become a mighty river of life on whose shores are trees of knowledge and of manifold blessing for the healing of the nations. And whatever imperfections his church has displayed in her worldly search for power, in her persecutions of dissenters, or in the unholy wars of her sects, it must ever be remembered that the most relentless critic of the church is its Founder himself. His warnings and his appeals are ever in the ears and before the eyes of his disciples. His spirit broods over his church, urging it to simpler and more vital faith, to more reliance upon the naked truth in every form, and to more complete devotion to

the care of human souls.

Is Christ then, divine? As well ask whether Shakespeare is a playwright or Kant a philosopher or Newton a mathematician. These men themselves set the standards by which their work is judged. And so of Jesus. He is divine if any being in all the known universe of human history is divine, for he himself has been the bearer of divine life to the world. With increasing faith, based upon growing evidence from his words, his character and his influence, the Christian of today can face all the world of knowledge and experience, and declare concerning Jesus Christ, He that hath seen him hath seen the Father.

"If Jesus Christ is a man—
And only a man, I say
That of all mankind I cleave to him,
And to him will I cleave alway.

"If Jesus Christ is a God,—
And the only God,—I swear
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air."

Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

And Nathaniel said unto him, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip saith unto him, "Come and see."

St. John 1:45-46.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. *Matthew* 7:15-17.

II.

THE EMPIRICAL VIEW OF JESUS

I can only suggest in a very summary way, here, what the empirical view of Jesus seems to me to involve. In the first place it means that the biblical records and the world-view in which he is presented to us are to be taken critically. One often hears arguments about the person and work of Christ in which the major premise is uncritically assumed. That major premise is to the effect that an infallible revelation was given through the inspired prophets of Israel, and through the writers of the New Testament. Then the only problem is to find out what the place of Christ is in this biblical cosmology.

A still more powerful factor implicit in the major premise of the theologians has been the Greek influence which was already at work in the New Testament writers and became dominant in the third and fourth centuries.

Here enters the logos notion and with it many metaphysical implications. Taking these and related doctrines for granted, it is easy to deduce scriptural and seemingly reasonable conclusions respecting the unique character of Jesus and his place in the redemptive system of this world-scheme. But all this biblical tradition and Greek influence are being placed in an ample historical perspective today, affording an interesting illustration of the way in which custom and habit come to be accepted as divine revelations and final truths. Under a critical, comparative examination, the development of the national life of the Jews, with their folk lore and ritual, and the scientific, speculative systems of the Greeks, are not fundamentally different—though more important for us—from the development of the ceremonials of the Chinese or of the Australian or African Blacks. Indeed what happened to the conception of Christ in relation to the old Hebrew and Greek civilizations is constantly illustrated in missionary work in other countries.

Everywhere the story of Jesus is apperceived by different races in terms of their history, their heroes and their ceremonials.

The ritual of the Hebrews was fixed in their nomadic, pastoral period, and therefore Jesus became the Lamb of God, and by His Jewish adherents was regarded as the great final sacrifice for the sin of the people. Miracles and wonders were familiar to the Hebrew mind, as to all primitive minds, and consequently this teacher and leader was accredited with miracles and wonders. It was commonly believed that the gods took the women of the human race for wives, and it was inevitable that as Jesus came to be regarded as a great personage, this half divine, half human parentage should be ascribed to him also. That these miracles and this birth should still be regarded by informed men of the present day as actual, literal facts is striking evidence of how much of the primitive age of child wonder and savage credulity still survive in the world. The only reason one is under any obliga-

tion to treat these things with some consideration is that they have involved the profoundest reverence and allegiance of many believers. They did help once perhaps to exalt Christ to a commanding place of leadership and spiritual power. But now they can only be accepted seriously for what they have meant in the past. They may still be serviceable in poetry and art and in various types of symbolism, but as literal matters of fact they should be put aside with other childish things. This critical, historical process is showing also that much of our accepted orthodoxy is due to the imposing influence of certain specific causes. Thus our notion of an infallible Bible arose in the seventeenth century and was directly occasioned by the need among Protestants for an offset to the infallible authority of Rome. It is highly amusing now to see this seventeenth century point of view projected back to the writers of the New Testament themselves and supported by a few texts of scripture. In the same general manner Dante and Milton have

furnished much authentic, first hand, New Testament doctrine! They succeeded in filling the popular mind with vivid and compelling imagery for which the accommodating poetic and figurative speech of the Bible afforded imposing, apostolic texts.

Now it is my own conviction that the ordinary discussions of the divinity of Christ move blindly in the circles of such world-views developed in primitive mythology, in Greek metaphysical speculations, or, it may be, in some form of Darwinism in our own time. The very term "divinity" seems to force us to put Christ either on the side of the ancient gods or to insist that he must be merely human and only natural—using "human" and "natural" in contrast to "divine," and therefore in a derogatory way.

With this very meager generalization, it may be possible to indicate more positively what the empirical view of Christ means. It seems to me that empiricism attaches no validity to the old dualism of the natural and supernatural, the human

and the divine and that therefore we are not any longer concerned with the "divinity" of Christ but rather with his goodness and his worth.

Empirically, that is, in human experience as we know it and are able to test it, we find that the distinctions between men are those of degree, of quality, and we apply a standard of values to men according to their intellectual, ethical and social functions. Men are great or small, wise or ignorant, good or bad in a system of experience which is urgent and practical. The old metaphysical conceptions of personality with their vocabulary of indivisible substance and special endowments are passing away. Gods, as well as men, are subject to new tests—tests of an ethical sort. Have they good hearts, good wills, efficient minds? The outward pomp and glory of our earthly kings have departed, and we are also becoming indifferent to the tinsel of the heavenly world. We have little interest in the question whether a being with a double nature such as Christ is often

represented, could suffer to death upon a Roman cross, but we are tremendously concerned as to whether men with one nature like our own can intelligently and disinterestedly labor and serve for the welfare of our kind here and now. So much is this attitude controlling us, that the older conception of Christ, as a being with a uniquely superior endowment, repels us from him. If he only acted out on earth the part for which he had been coached in heaven, or if he did a man's task with a god's strength, or if he possessed the equivalent of a magic key to unlock the plain, everyday difficulties which we meet barehanded, then he only makes our despair the deeper; for he is a constant reminder that we are mocked by a categorical imperative to perform duties too great for us, and to solve problems which to our reason are conundrums, forever dark to our natural thought by virtue of a double use of words.

But on the other hand, if he really was like us, born of two human parents, nurtured by a good mother, schooled in the

lore of his people, sensitive to its plaintive, minor note, responsive to the best of the prophetic ideals and the wisdom of the wise men; able to translate all this into the beatitudes and the story of the prodigal son and the good Samaritan; able also to actually practice genuine friendship with Zaccheus and the Samaritan woman and with Judas, and to forgive those who crucified him; always believing in the power of love and of his righteous cause; then he makes our hearts burn within us, he draws us into his fellowship, he affords us courage and faith and redeems us from all sin and weakness. We can then find the inner word of his gospel for an enlightened age, and can start, at least, on the way toward a new apologetic and a more powerful evangel. We can even use much of the old symbolism, for it is capable of pointing to the living realities of our experience in comparison with which the old things suggested by that symbolism were mock-heroic and tawdry. I mean that the cross becomes symbolic of the pain of every earnest soul in the ac-

complishment of duty. The shed blood of Jesus is typical of the price men always pay for the right to think and to feel better things than the officials of the established order. That pathetic, bleeding figure of Christ has come to represent for many of us not the weird magic of a dying god's power, but the redeeming quality of the mother's love, the patriot's devotion, the modern social worker's sacrifice for his fellows. It was natural that the ancient Jewish Christian should associate the blood of Christ with the blood of the Lamb upon the ancestral altar. It is equally natural and right for us to associate the blood of Christ with the blood of our great suffering servant of his people, the martyred Abraham Lincoln.

But it may be asked, What ontological significance has all this? What is the relation of Christ to the absolute, the world substance, to God? My answer cannot be categorical and yet it must be brief. I will confess bluntly that I have lost interest in ontological questions. I do, however, think it true that the per-

sonality of Jesus reveals the heart of the world, in some such way as a beautiful oak tree makes known the nature of the soil it grows in. When we see the great oak, we may be sure at least that the soil its deep roots penetrate, is, with the other elements of rain and sun, equal to the production of that oak. The strength and beauty of that tree are expressions of nature's life. In the same way a noble man is proof that the world, the material, mental, spiritual world, has expressed itself in him. He is a revelation of the world, of nature, of God. In this way, with his marvelous moral grandeur and simplicity, Jesus Christ seems to me to be a revelation of the best things we know about the world.

I realize that some defiant souls, rebelling against the impossible claims the past has made for Christ, deny that he ever lived at all. I am not one of those, but even if he never lived, we have yet to reckon with the ideal which his name suggests. And the ideal is a fact as stubborn and as obvious as a

flesh and blood existence. If the ideal of Christ has grown up either by imposture or by good intention or by an unconscious idealization of virtue, it is nevertheless among the finest things we possess, and is the product of our own life in any case. I think Christ is a reality of both sorts at once, actual and ideal. I think the evidence is sufficient that the man Jesus lived and also that his disciples and the church have idealized him. The idealizing process is evident in a casual survey of Christian history and especially in Christian art. The early representations of Jesus show him as a shepherd carrying a lamb in his bosom. Then his features become more ascetic and heroic. His eyes seem withdrawn from his immediate surroundings and take on the distant look of the mystic or the stern appearance of a commander or of a judge. All the light of human sympathy seems lost for a time, until in the modern schools he becomes once more,

> "The lover of women and men
> With a love that puts to shame
> All passions of human ken."

In our day when the ideal of social service is coming to be supreme, we like to believe that we understand Jesus better than any other age has done, not excepting his own. Therefore, we put great stress upon the social teachings of Jesus and he becomes to our imagination the chief figure in the forefront of our crusades against disease, bad tenements, heartless corporations, child-labor and the rest. Luckily we have abundant and familiar texts of scripture to support much of this idealization of Jesus and we have the sense at once of historicity and of ideal values in our Christian message as no other age has had.

But while it is true, as I see it, that we may generalize somewhat from this empirical fact of the historic and ideal Christ to the conclusion that the world has that degree of moral character in it, yet I feel much more certain of the following: namely, that Jesus Christ is a kind of pledge and promise of what other human beings may accomplish. The horticulturists are proving that the existence of

one beautiful tree may become a pattern after which others may be developed. In some instances they have gained sufficient control of the process to reproduce the type in any numbers desired. Sometimes, it is true, the individual variation proves to be a freak, sterile and inimitable. It is perhaps late enough in the history of Christianity to conclude that Christ is an imitable type, that his mind and will are increasingly reproduced and that in the far future it may be possible that society, even in commerce and business, shall be controlled by his will and move in harmony with his purposes. This seems to me the supreme empirical test of Christ. Can his wisdom and his spirit be actualized in the world, in a society of men, in a heavenly kingdom of love and peace? If so, then Jesus will be shown to be not an abnormality, but a normal product in our world, and thereby our world itself will be demonstrated to be favorable, yes equal to the creation of a race of Christian men.

It is important to realize that this state-

ment transfers the problem from the realm of static things, the things of a hidden past and the alleged realities behind our experience, to dynamic things in the future and to the things implicit in our present experience. The old questions have been, did Christ live with God before the world? Did he come forth from God? Is he the revelation of a God hidden behind the scenes? The new questions are, "Will Christ live in the future? Will he bring a godlike life into the world for all men? Will he build God's kingdom before our eyes? More directly stated, Christ presents a problem not for the intellect alone but primarily for the will. The question is not, what think ye of Christ? But what will you do about Christ's example and ideal of life? It is obligatory upon his followers yet to make the demonstration which shall prove what Christ was. The saying of the writer of Hebrews concerning the ancient worthies may include Jesus too. He asserts that it was not possible "that they should reach their full perfection apart from us." If his disciples

succeed in growing a race of men like him, then Jesus will be proved good. If they cannot do this, then he will be shown to be less than the best for our world where what we need is not sentimental righteousness, but actual, tangible, testable, workable goodness.

In accordance with what I have said, I am in favor of changing the wording of the Christian confession in order to restore the simple, New Testament meaning of it. Instead of asking a candidate, Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God? I would ask him, Are you willing to follow Jesus and to do the utmost within your power to establish his kingdom of love in the world? If he earnestly said, "Yes," I would count him of that splendid company of the elect who venture their lives in a vast moral enterprise, one issue of which may be to prove whether there really is a God in the universe good enough to be called the Father of Jesus Christ.

Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. *Matthew* 11:27.

My aim is that they may be encouraged, and be bound to one another by love, so attaining to the full blessedness of a firm and intelligent conviction, and to a perfect knowledge of God's secret truths which are embodied in Christ. For all God's treasures of wisdom and knowledge are to be found stored up in Christ.

Colossians 2:2.

Dear friends, we are God's children now; what we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed. What we do know is that, if it should be revealed, we shall be like Christ.

I John 3:2.

III.

WHY I AM NOT A UNITARIAN.

The justification for such a personal statement as follows is that I have been asked why I am not a Unitarian. At times it is vigorously asserted that I am one anyhow. I do not deny being a "liberal," but I do reserve the privilege of stating what kind of a liberal I am. It is a bad fallacy to assert that all men who are not white are black. Likewise, it is altogether too easy and too narrow a view to conclude that because a man is not a perfectly orthodox Trinitarian evangelical Christian, he must therefore be a Unitarian.

It is true there are many good things about Unitarianism. It is characterized by great intellectual culture, by philanthropy and patriotism. There is also tolerance in this fellowship for men of very different theological opinions. Even in its doctrinal contentions, which as a system I cannot accept, there are many admirable elements such as emphasis upon the hu-

manity of Jesus and upon a reasonable method of biblical study. But as a whole the Unitarian movement is too negative, too much of a protest and therefore too individualistic and too critical. It does not furnish the will the normal motives for action nor supply the emotions sufficient expression. It lacks great constructive, socializing tendencies, as is proved by its failure to gain adherents even among those classes which are rapidly freeing themselves from traditional doctrines and superstitions.

On account of its critical spirit and the great divergence of doctrine among its representative men, it is not easy to formulate a statement of views which all Unitarians would accept as typical. The positions attributed to them here are those which have impressed me in reading their own writers and in observing the activities of their ministers and churches. My reasons for not being a Unitarian do not, however, spring from my acceptance of the opposite doctrine of Trinitarianism. The study of the history of religion and

of the social sciences has developed a position different from both of these historic contentions. I have a very real enthusiasm in quoting and adopting a characteristic saying of the early leaders of my own denomination: "I am neither a Unitarian nor a Trinitarian but strive to be simply a Christian." The Disciples of Christ have employed this statement to indicate that they were not concerned with the theological questions suggested by these names, but were seeking to devote themselves to practical Christianity in a direct and simple way. They were striving to be guided only by the teachings of the New Testament in which neither of these party names appears. While this naive rejection of the contentions of both schools helped to make emphatic the immediate practical message of the Disciples, it now happily affords also freedom for the restatement of religious truth in terms of the new way of thinking peculiar to this age of scientific knowledge and social democracy. And this new way of thought is itself concerned primarily with

practice more than with theory, with life more than with doctrine. It is known in the schools as empiricism, as pragmatism, as humanism. Those who in the simplicity of their minds suppose that this interpretation of life and religion is identical with the older "rationalism" or with "scepticism," thereby reveal their ignorance of it. And when they suppose it has been abundantly "answered" by the discussions of the older orthodox theologians they are opposing alchemy to chemistry, and astrology to astronomy.

My first reason, then, is that I do not accept the point of view which the very name Unitarian implies. It takes one horn of the ancient Greek dilemma that substance must be either one or many, and insists that God is one. We are beginning to see that God, like any other reality, may be both one and many. In a sense, such mathematical categories are wholly inapplicable. It is a controversy which involves the nature of the divine "personality." For ages it has been discussed in terms of substance, static, fixed,

immobile. But the whole matter appears in a different way when the modern, prevailing dynamic view is employed. Now, "personality" is what it does. It appears under varying aspects from different angles and diverse relations. The human personality itself must be described according to the point of view from which it is regarded. The doctrine that each person is in reality a congeries of many selves, or systems of habits, has the sanction of the highest authority in psychology. Whatever unity personality possesses is the unity of a system, of an organism, and not the round and solid oneness of an inert mass. So long as one thinks of substance mechanically there is necessarily a sharp opposition between an indivisible unity and that which is constituted of separable parts. But when substance is taken dynamically and organically—the only way in which we can longer think of personality—then it may be both one and many without contradiction, or inconsistency. With the acceptance of this modern conception of personality, we do

not so much solve the old dilemma. We escape it. It becomes unreal. Therefore the contestants on both sides appear like the warriors in Valhalla,—waging a warfare which is no longer significant in the present world.

The second reason why I am not an advocate of Unitarianism is that it presupposes a dualism between the natural and the supernatural, placing God on the side of the supernatural and man, with all created beings, on the side of the natural. The most significant use of this distinction is its application to the doctrine of Christ. The Unitarian theologians do not all agree in their conception of the distinction, but they all make it in some form. For Channing, who still believed in miracles, Jesus was not coequal with God. Later writers tend more to identify Jesus with the human level, while attributing to him exceptional genius and the distinction of being the world's greatest ethical teacher and example. Throughout the history of the Unitarian heresy, from the days of

Socinus, it has magnified the contrast between the natural and supernatural, the human and the divine. Orthodox theologians only differed from this position by adding that the natural is evil, and that human nature is burdened with original sin. Hence orthodoxy insisted upon the need of a supernatural redemption accomplished through a divinely unique Savior. Unitarians have not denied the contrast between the human and the divine but have rejected the notion of the inherent sinfulness of man and consequently have blunted the doctrine of redemption as a supernatural operation. Their teaching concerning man proceeds in the opposite direction from their doctrine concerning Christ, though both are more or less conscious protests against the views of the orthodox. They insist that Christ has been too much identified with deity; man has been thought too sinful. But like the orthodox, the Unitarians were wrapt in the inexorable logic of a sharp contrast between the divine and the human. Christ was one or

the other. The Trinitarians said, as divine, he could save sinful man. As human, he would be impotent to effect the great salvation. The Unitarians said, as human, he could be an example and leader for man. As divine, he would compromise the unity and self-sufficiency of God. The escape from this argument demands a fundamentally different view of the world than the disputants have held. They have both accepted the underlying dualism, and without questioning its validity, have chosen to champion opposite extremes.

Now it is precisely this dualism which I do not accept, and when dualism is discarded the old contentions lose their meaning. I do not believe there is a natural and a supernatural order, a human and a divine sphere of being. Life is one: its differences are those of degree, of quality. Scientific evolution has contributed endless confirmation to this idea. In its perspective, the various orders of creation form a series, the continuity of which makes any seeming gaps only problems for further investigation under the gen-

erally established hypothesis. Man stands in organic relation to all the orders below him, possessing not only a physical structure fundamentally like that of the earthworm, but a sentiency as well. The intelligence of animals, like their anatomy, is strikingly human. Nothing below him is foreign to man, nor is anything that is above him! He shares the image and likeness of God. What religion has long asserted, psychology is now demonstrating in reference to this likeness between God and man. For it is becoming clear that man cannot fashion any conception of God except by means of this likeness. If love, wisdom and work, as we know them, mean utterly different things when applied to God then our world is a madhouse, and God is only a greater illusion than ourselves. But when He is conceived in terms of this likeness, then He becomes great but not distant, wise but not unknowable, gracious but not without the quality of man's purest love and justice. The most appealing passages of scripture employ this truth. God is the

Father of man! Can man believe then that it is sacrilegious to assert that he is of the same nature with God? God is the Friend of man! Can man have companionship with any being lacking man's quality of heart and will? The issue is crucial in the deepest religious life of our time: either there exists the *likeness* or there is no God at all.

Having squarely faced this oneness of man and God, one does not avow Unitarianism in accepting the humanity of Jesus, for to say that Christ was a man does not imply the denial of his divinity; and to assert his divinity is not to deny his human parentage. If the natural birth of the average man does not preclude his oneness with God, then neither does the natural birth of Jesus preclude his oneness with God. The greatness of Jesus must be conceived in ethical and spiritual terms, and therefore as something which is not guaranteed by a mysterious birth and is not lessened by an ordinary one. The truest features of the New Testament delineation of Jesus are those humanly true

and elemental experiences which are essential to the development of all genuine moral character. No overgrowth of idealization or adoration in the first century was able to obliterate these traces of the spiritual biography of Jesus as it came by tradition from those who knew him personally. The impression is still clear that he was tempted in all points as we are; that he attained great honor because he was humble; that he was popular because he was kind to the poor; that he became the "captain of our salvation," because he suffered much and was faithful; that he attained the full measure of sonship to God because he loved his fellow men and gave himself for them.

Just here lies a third reason why I do not accept Unitarianism. Like Trinitarianism, it has employed an impossible method of interpreting Christ through God. It has been customary in both schools to assume that we must start with the person and character of God and then determine the nature of Christ. Nothing could be more unbiblical, unchristian, or

unscientific. That is like taking the X of an algebraic equation to determine the given factors. In the Christian system, Christ and human experience are the given factors and God is the X. The contending disputants have started with the unknown quantity and have reached different conclusions about the given realities. One said the given realities equal X, and the other said they equal X minus. What is there in common with either procedure when one takes the given factors and by means of them reaches a conclusion concerning the nature of X?

The latter is the method of the empirical science of our day which is remaking our world of thought and faith. Empiricism starts with facts, with tangible experiences, and cautiously builds upon them. It has great respect for reality, for history, for criticized and classified knowledge. If religion is to be vital and satisfying in this new age, it must also deal with facts of actual experience, discarding superstitions, miracles and magic. The facts of the Christian religion center in the moral

character and teaching of Jesus. The Christian conception of God is of necessity a generalization based upon these facts, and upon the accumulating experience of the race as affected by these facts throughout a long history. The life and personality of Christ are vivid and powerful realities. His words, ideals and sacrificial devotion live intimately and productively in the spiritual depths of mankind. They are the avenues through which we behold our God. "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me." Christ "is the image of the invisible God," not because this statement occurs in a verse of scripture, but because in making our estimate of God we are compelled by the nature of our minds to employ the best characters we know. The whole discussion about the divinity of Christ is usually vitiated by the fallacy of assuming certainty with reference to God, and then arguing whether Christ is of the same nature, whereas all we can legitimately do is to begin with the warm, blood-red spirit of Jesus Christ and ask ourselves

whether the heart of God is like that.

The significant thing finally is not so much whether Christ is divine, as whether God is Christlike! And the only way to determine this is by asking whether Christ is an exception or a normal product in the life of the world. If other lives like his are possible; if the social order is capable of incarnating his spirit; if a kingdom of Christlike men and women can be built in the world; then we may believe that the heart of the world beats true to the heart of Christ, and that God—the inmost Soul of all—is like the soul of Christ. This is the crux. Men are not cynical about Christ. They do not doubt his goodness. They want their children to know him and they would delight to see his spirit rule the world. There is little if any serious dissent from his ideals. But there is much doubt whether his teachings are practicable; whether his unselfishness, meekness, and idealism are capable of realization in a universe where power and cunning seem supreme. And unless they

are possible of attainment there would seem to be only tragic mockery in things and our experience could furnish no evidence that there is a God worthy to be called the Father of Jesus Christ. What is needed to create faith in the soul of the modern man is evidence that Christianity is fitted to the task of creating a better moral order, a juster social system. This practical achievement would demonstrate the quality of the world we live in and relieve us of the present difficult task of proving the infinite goodness of God in the face of a seemingly very bad world.

One further reason why I am not a Unitarian is that religion, like all our life, is so much a matter of appreciation and volition and so little an affair of the intellect. It is being discovered that the great religions of the race are not and cannot be primarily matters of the intellect. Religion lives in the realm of the practical life, in the midst of the struggle for existence. It needs the correcting and guiding light of reason, but it does not spring from reason nor depend upon it

any more than do the marriage customs of the race. Unitarianism was formed and given its bent before the social aspect of man's life was understood, and there are inherent limitations in the individualism and rationalism of the movement which are the survivals of those formative influences.

On this account it never fully understood or appreciated the real strength of the orthodox communions. It was always inclined to view the latter as if they were founded upon their creeds. All members of orthodox churches were judged as if they were expected to understand these creeds and either be able to defend them or candid enough to renounce them. But the great evangelical denominations are not held together by their logic. They are great brotherhoods, fellowships, communions. These very words signify their nature. The bonds which unite them are powerful sentiments of affection and duty; great moral ideals embodied in their leaders and in their institutional life; great unifying activities of benevolence and mis-

sionary zeal. It is with all the life of religion much as it is with the hymns and the ritual of the churches; it is the emotional appeal and the awakening of wonderful moods which make them effective. Such hymns and rites are themselves the product of the heart in moments of intense feeling when the tremendous drama of salvation is vividly conceived for the individual or the race. They are set deep in the customs and habitual experiences of the people. They were not consciously and deliberately instituted, and they do not yield quickly to criticism or opposition. If their roots did not go deeper than the clear judgments of the mind, they would perhaps be more amenable to reason but they would also be less significant.

In some such way the Unitarians have misunderstood much of the orthodox attitude toward Christ. He was felt by the early church to have an official and corporate significance with reference to the whole race. The sense of solidarity, so intense in the Jewish people, naturally

dominated the Christian community. Christ became the expression of this social unity. Loyalty to him in a national and cosmic sense was expressed in the doctrines of his pre-existence, virgin birth and miraculous deeds. The same tendency imputed magical efficacy to his death and to his blood. Such supernatural qualities were universally ascribed to the heroes of the early ages of the race. They were evidences of loyalty, of affection, of reverence. And the more elaborate doctrines which came with the later history of the church were still occasioned and permeated by this deep rooted affection and devotion to the Head of the church.

There has also been in the individual Christian consciousness a parallel development of the same emotional and practical character. Christian duty and responsibility have grown up as the sense of living communion between Christ and his followers. Under the influence of these prevalent conceptions the sinner is led into most vivid experiences in which he has

visions of Christ and feels certain of the divine presence. Now it has not been sufficiently recognized that psychologically such a living companionship is real and invaluable. Christ lives in the Christian's experience as vitally as if he walked by our side. We get comfort, inspiration and guidance through him. To deny this is to deny obvious facts of experience. The denial is intended, doubtless, to apply only to the idea that Christ literally lives in some transcendental existence and yet visits men in strange and unaccountable ways. But in criticizing this transcendental view the difficulty has been to allow proper value and reality to the psychical and spiritual experiences themselves. It is the old warfare between the letter and the spirit, between literalism and symbolism. When the mental processes involved in fellowship with Christ are better understood they will appear both more natural and more significant.

What Christ may mean to one, quite aside from any unwarranted mysticism, is illustrated in the following incident

told me recently by a friend who has grown away from the traditional conceptions of Christianity. During a severe illness she was cared for in a Catholic hospital. Above her bed hung a crucifix. In her weakness and pain and uncertainty of life her eyes rested upon the anguished face and bleeding form of the Christ. She was surprised at herself that she did not turn away in a kind of horror of it all after the manner of her sophisticated moods. But instead she continued to look upon the face and form, and the lips seemed to speak to her heart saying very simply, "I have suffered too." And in that word was a great comfort.

There is ever this deep and elemental something in the crucified Christ which makes him live and speak to our hearts. He greets us with unexpected appeals. He opens new life before us. He brings comfort and inspiration. He bears away, as it were, the burdens of our sin and makes us whole again. He becomes a living presence, obliterating the centuries and all outward circumstances by the

energy of his deathless love. It is this sense of vital relation with Christ which a recent writer holds to be the distinguishing essential of orthodox churches. He says, "Here, then, is clearly defined the barrier which separates Unitarians from Christians of other denominations. These have or believe they have vital personal relations with Jesus Christ, who is in the world revealing the Father, and through whom they have access to the Father and receive his life."*

The personality of Christ is to these churches a fusing, organizing, impelling power. Through it they lay hold of the consciences of men with a firm grip, and they present to the imagination a definite image of divine compassion and sustaining companionship. This personality stirs the emotions and stimulates the will as statements of fact and logic cannot do. The strength of the older churches lies in this warmth and depth of the social life, organized in terms of the personality of

*The Congregationalist, November 13, 1909.

Christ and directed to the fulfillment of the highest ideals as the expressions of his gracious will. But this religious symbolism of Christianity is not dependent upon the theological traditions of the past and in a freed and exalted form may yet become the language of that religion of the spirit which the new science and the new democracy are creating.

Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart:
So doth the sweetness of a man's friend that cometh of hearty counsel.

Thine own friend and thy father's friend, forsake not.

Iron sharpeneth iron;
So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

A friend loveth at all times,
And is born as a brother for adversity.

There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. *Proverbs.*

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you. *St. John* 15:13, 14, 51.

IV.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS.

A notable characteristic of modern religious thought is the growing appreciation of the naturalness of Jesus. More and more he emerges from the mysterious half-lights of earlier credulity and speculation into the clear and simple human life of his times and race. Accordingly his words and deeds take on more normal meanings. They get their great power and value less from their eccentric nature and more from the profound way in which they express and clarify the best spirit and ideals of his people. This sense of reality concerning Jesus is strengthened by the direct and unaffected relation which he sustained toward his disciples. He encouraged them to the closest personal companionship. He called them friends, a term which he consciously chose and into which he put the very soul of his gospel. Note the deliberation of his words: "No longer do I call you servants;

for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you." By that new and hearty word he revealed the true bond between himself and his followers and the foundation of all genuine fellowship. It is therefore of central importance to understand what the friendship of Jesus involves. I shall consider its basis, its authority and its value as a social ideal.

Friendship always rests upon some sort of equality. It is essentially a reciprocal relationship. In this respect it stands in sharp contrast to such terms as master and servant, king and subject, priest and people. All these imply a definite and radical inequality. They are mutually exclusive and presuppose differences of birth or fortune or endowment. It was just this external sense of difference which Jesus sought to remove, and he indicated this intention by choosing a designation in its very nature antithetic to all class distinctions. The correlative of the word friend is also friend, but the correlative of

master is servant, which suggests a totally different sphere of life. Jesus put himself upon the same plane with his followers, both by adapting himself to them and by elevating them so far as possible to his own point of view.

The proof which he gives of his sincerity in calling them friends is further illustration of the fact that his friendship requires mutual confidence. The guarantee of friendliness is frank, unreserved communication. Secrecy or indirectness is a barrier and menace to good fellowship. It belongs to the relation of master and servant. The servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But Jesus told his disciples everything. His faithful endeavor had been to make known his whole thought and purpose. He used the method of conversation, of question and answer, to make plain his meaning. His stories were homely and picturesque vehicles for the deepest and most intimate thoughts of his heart. The only hindrance to the complete understanding of Jesus in his own day as in this, arose from the dull-

ness, the blindness, the wickedness of human nature. It is everywhere his desire to be revealed, disclosed, transparent.

One of the specific doctrines of Jesus which gave support to the sense of equality through which alone friendship could be cultivated was that of the universal fatherhood of God. He himself was the son of God, but so also were his disciples sons of God. In the prayer which he taught them he said, Our Father. There was therefore nothing inconsistent in being friends with them. It was the natural attitude. Their sonship justified the unfailing interest of Christ in all classes of people, and it thrilled all who heard his message with a new sense of self-respect and hope. This doctrine gave a new value to the human soul and explained the zest and seriousness and sympathy with which Jesus companied with them and called them friends. No other motive was needed to account for the interest which he took in people. That alone was sufficient reason for his patience and persistence and optimism.

Another powerful factor in the development of mutual interest between individuals is some common experience, in ideals cherished, work accomplished, loss sustained, injustice felt or suffering endured. Jesus saw that his followers and he would be welded together in fiery furnaces and herioc struggles. It would be another test and evidence of their friendship. They would always know that he too had suffered for the truth. No man could give greater evidence of his love for them than by the consecration of his whole life even to the point of death. By nothing else has the world been touched and drawn to Christ so much as by the sense of his manifold experience of the common human lot. His hunger, thirst, weariness, toil, tears, temptations, quicken our sympathy and devotion. Here at least he was like us. The friendship of such a man is sensitive, resourceful and strong. He can give good counsel, he can uplift the discouraged and forsaken. He can inspire new ambition, and point the way to the things which satisfy and save.

But when Christ proclaimed himself a friend, what became of his authority? Obviously in giving up the relation of master, he gave up also the kind of authority which belongs to it. Friendship excludes the very idea of authority based upon power or magic or secrets. It is incompatible with any external or arbitrary commands. It retains only the authority of the truth, of experience, of that which appeals to the conscience and reason. What an emancipation was proclaimed when Jesus said, Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free! There is no other spiritual freedom, and this must be won by each individual for himself. Even Jesus himself can exert no real influence over men except through the truth, and indeed through their perception of the truth.

It was this which gave such a wealth of meaning to his declaration: A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. That commandment was so new, so unique, that it was in fact something far different from a legal command.

How can anyone love to order? Every true parent knows that his child's affection is not subject to force. The child must be won through appeals to his interests, his intelligence, his self-respect. It is in that way alone that the wisest and greatest of men can permanently control their fellow men. The gospel of friendship between God and man was therefore a far higher stage than religion had ever before consciously attained. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The authority of Jesus is the authority of a discoverer. He gained unusual insight into moral and religious truth and lived by it himself. He thought of himself as subject to the spiritual forces of the world just as others are. His words are more convincing and illuminating than others because they reflect a larger experience and a clearer discernment of the moral order. He urged his hearers to test his way of life for themselves, not to take it upon blind faith. He explicitly told them that his experience could not stand

in stead of theirs. It could only show the way, and give encouragement. When he sent his disciples out as he had gone, he warned them that they would meet the same difficulties and persecutions. In order to attain what he had attained they would have to pass through the same discipline. He had to win his throne by his cross and they must do the same. If they could be baptized with the same baptism of self-surrender and drink the same cup of suffering they could attain to the same distinction. He won God's love by doing God's will and that way was open to every one.

Nothing of this spirit is signified by the authority of a king or master. Their rule rests upon the nature of their person, due to their birth or some other accident or favor of fortune. Whether their commands are reasonable or capricious has nothing to do with their validity. They claim the sovereign right of arbitrary power. But all this was discarded by Christ the moment he called his disciples friends. It would liberate and elevate the

Christian consciousness if it could abandon the words king and sovereign. They carry the imagery and implications of worn-out social institutions and of effete forms of thought. They are survivals of outgrown customs and they hang upon the modern spirit like dead weights. More helpful analogies could be found in the spheres of science and of art. Here a man's authority depends upon his achievements. What he says is accepted in so far as it is justified by the known facts and by all reasonable tests. The scientist himself does not originate nor even validate the truths with which he deals. At least they do not depend upon him as an individual. They have objective and universal meaning and he himself is as much subject to them as anyone else. The only way in which he can make them truly effective for other persons is by taking those persons into his confidence, by leading them to his own knowledge and insight and technical skill.

Here is found the same kind of relationship into which Jesus sought to

bring his disciples. He awakened them to his own views and ambitions. He gave them eyes to see the foundations of the moral order in the world about them. For example, a man cannot be satisfied in a life of pleasure. The prodigal son, the living counterpart for whom may be seen in any community, is the evidence. Or again, riches are not stable enough to justify one's whole effort; look at the rich fool! Or once more a conventional, formal, traditional religion keeps people away from God and true righteousness. The Pharisees of every age are the proof. In the same way every beatitude, and the whole teaching of Jesus grounds itself in experience, in the purpose which it serves, in the transformation which it effects in the character of him who follows it. It is on this account that Jesus has eternal value for the religious life. His authority is that of one who has himself found God—found him a father and a companion of earnest souls. Jesus only tells us what he has first learned and proved and what can

be proved over and over again in the life of both his humblest and his greatest disciple.

The friendship which Jesus taught and saw partially realized among his immediate followers has become more and more a conscious social ideal. It has become a kind of test and standard of progress. The writer of Proverbs seems to have thought the possibilities of friendship very limited. The word with him does not have the steady, habitual meaning of Christian thought. Mere courtiers, or the clientele of a rich man are called friends, and he that maketh many friends of that kind "doeth it to his own destruction." In that earlier view it is not thought possible to have many true, genuine friends. It was Jesus who emphasized the possibility and the duty of having multitudes of friends. He enjoined and exemplified a friendship which was not hindered by any external conditions of station or race or occupation. It required only a right disposition, a disposition of deference and helpfulness, a recognition of the value and

capacities of human beings. Wherever the sense of spiritual kinship existed or could be cultivated, there was an open way for the kingdom of heaven.

That Jesus lived by that principle himself is proved by the sneers of his opponents, who called him a friend of tax-gatherers and the godless. If we could appreciate the abhorrence and scorn which was put into those words by the conventional people who used them, we would realize the independence and human sympathy of Jesus in finding companionship among the ostracized and forlorn. Doubtless their sincerity as well as their need appealed to him, for in his thought the candid sinner is nearer the kingdom than the pretentious saint. Hypocrisy is the worst enemy of friendship and therefore Jesus denounced it more bitterly than any other sin. But he had some hope of those who knew their faults and made no claim to righteousness.

Gradually the broad, inclusive love of Jesus has been imitated by his church. Throughout all classes of men there is a

growing sense of a common nature and of reciprocal interests. By slow process it is being made clear that all social institutions must discontinue the master-servant relation and enter into more human and brotherly co-operation. The institution of slavery was doomed when the spirit of the gospel rose to power over the consciences of men. It is true Jesus did not decry the external fact of slavery but he did undermine it and removed all but the name by enjoining kindness on the part of masters and faithfulness on the part of slaves. Imagine the relation between these classes where both were truly Christian! Gentleness and guidance from the superior, docility and patient toil from the inferior, with a mutual understanding. Is it any wonder that in numerous instances the abolition of American slavery made little difference between master and servants because the latter preferred to remain practically the same as they were? It is not, after all, the external relations which determine the value of life but rather the personal and human factors.

Without the latter no conditions can be judged by Christian principles.

Jesus doubtless startled his hearers by the application of this test of friendship to the family, the oldest and most sacred social institution. When someone came and announced that his mother and brothers desired to speak to him, he said, Who is my mother? and who are my brothers? Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. That is to say that the accident of birth cannot determine spiritual relationships. It frequently happens that by difference of temperament or long separation, blood relationship becomes quite meaningless, and it is never of vital import except as it is permeated and idealized by common interests and heart to heart experiences. Unless brothers are also good friends, unless husband and wife, parents and children are also true companions, they miss the richest and the finest joys of the home. They need to devote themselves with the utmost care and patience to the

cultivation of mutual friendship, for which nothing is so effective as the simple religion of Jesus.

Nowhere has the inner and mutual sense of equality and helpfulness been more effective than in modern education. It has entirely changed the attitude of the teacher toward the child. Instead of regarding him as a rebellious nature to be subdued and repressed, the teacher has begun to put herself at his side, as Rousseau advised. She now studies his interests, his talents, his play and his work to know how she can best befriend him in order to guide him. The formal restraints and the dull exercises of older methods have largely given way to natural means. Nothing could better illustrate the spirit of the teacher who rebuked his disciples for ignoring the children and graciously received them into his arms, with blessings.

Other vast fields of human life remained to be brought under the influence of this ideal. It has developed the race problem, which is something far more than a matter

of political economy or politics. It has precipitated the great social problems of our day. Every move of organized labor and of capital adds proof to the impossibility of longer maintaining masters and servants in the industrial life. Their interests are one and they will best be promoted by friendship, not by enmity. Out in the still larger spheres, the lesson is being learned upon an international scale, and the growing importance of diplomacy and of arbitration point to the better day of peace and national friendship.

But the greatest changes of all are being wrought by this friendship of Jesus in the lives of his followers and in his church. It has taken a discouraging length of time for Christian people to apply among themselves this central theme of Christ's religion, and they are far from its full realization yet. But gradually we are learning how to be friends in local congregations and across denominational lines. At last the awful days of religious persecution are past, and it seems impossible that they should ever

return. But Christ prayed for much more than tolerance between his disciples. He prayed for their union and for their organized activity. The simpler views of Jesus and the more practical appreciation of the friendship which he enjoined are now uniting the church and teaching it to minister to the needs of mankind. This unfailing power of Christ has inspired these prophetic lines of Richard Watson Gilder:

Behold him now where he comes!
Not the Christ of our subtile creeds,
But the lord of our hearts, of our homes,
Of our hopes, our prayers, our needs;
The brother of want and blame,
The lover of women and men,
With a love that puts to shame
All passions of human ken.

* * * *

Ah no, thou life of the heart,
Never shalt thou depart!
Not till the leaven of God
Shall lighten each human clod;
Not till the world shall climb
To thy height serene, sublime,
Shall the Christ who enters our door
Pass to return no more.

Unless a man has the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ; but if Christ is within you, then, though the body is dead as a consequence of sin, the spirit is full of Life as a consequence of righteousness.

All who are guided by the Spirit of God are God's sons. *Romans* 8.

Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates.

2 *Corinthians* 13:5.

V.

THE REINCARNATION OF CHRIST.

To the apostle Paul, the presence of Christ in the believer's life, was a demonstrable fact. The great proof of it was the expulsion of the carnal or sinful nature. "If Christ is in you, the body is dead,"—"body" meaning for him the lower nature in all its forms. Another evidence of Christ being in a man, was the man's willingness to suffer for the same things for which Christ suffered. "We are troubled on every side," he said, "yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." It was from the Christ in him that Paul derived strength to do all things. So completely did he feel himself identified with his master that he exclaimed,

"to me to live is Christ," and again, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." There are other similar expressions in Paul's writings concerning the indwelling of God and of the Holy Spirit as well as of Christ. But whatever the phrase, the import is ever the same, that the divine energy takes possession of the believer, guides his will, gives him words to speak and yearns to utter itself fully in his life.

In order to realize the significance of this language of Paul, it is necessary to take it in connection with the other set of forces which operate in the world. It is not only Christ who may enter into a man. Satan and other evil spirits may do the same. Paul attributes the wickedness of people to their being possessed by Satan, just as he explains their goodness by the presence of Christ. He says: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which be-

lieve not." He excuses himself for not visiting the Thessalonians by the fact that once and again Satan hindered him. In his unsuccessful struggle to do the right, he explains it by the presence in him of the carnal mind. "It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." There are many remarks of Paul which show that he had a very vivid belief that the world about him was peopled by good and by bad spirits, which could enter into and possess men and control their acts. "Principalities, powers and rulers of the darkness of this world" are for him evil beings just as real as the devil himself, against whose wiles the Christian is urged to put on the whole armor of God. It was common in the New Testament times to attribute physical disease to demons which entered the body, and Paul speaks of his own physical malady, his "thorn in the flesh" as a messenger of Satan. It was in order to conquer this ruler of the evil world that it became necessary for Christ to die. But Christ's death did not destroy the evil spirits, it only broke their

power and made it possible for a man possessed by the good spirit of Christ to attain virtue and eternal life.

The human heart was thus a battle ground for the possession of which the good and the evil contended. This was no figure of speech for the apostles, but was the statement of actual and tremendous realities. The presence of the evil demons was abundantly attested by physical maladies and by all forms of immorality, lying, drunkenness, blasphemy, covetousness, pride, and love of pleasure. Even Luke, who was a physician, and who would naturally have taken a more scientific view if it had existed at that time, constantly attributed diseases to evil spirits.

To be possessed by Christ, to have him dwelling in one, meant for St. Paul, the presence of a power stronger than the evil spirits which would bring one safely through every temptation, every loss, every hardship, and enable him at last to meet fearlessly the greatest foe—death itself—and through Christ to rise even

from the grave. The sublime faith of Paul opposed to this encircling host of evil spirits the mightier spirit of Christ. "We are more than conquerors," he exclaimed, "through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, *nor any other creature*, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It was in such an age that the miracles, particularly the resurrection of Christ, made their powerful appeal to the imagination. It was a time when every one believed in ghosts, in apparitions, in miracles and wonders. The only way in which good spirits could be shown to be more powerful than evil spirits, was by performing much more astounding miracles. It was perhaps on this account that the resurrection from the dead, which would everywhere be considered the greatest miracle, was made by Paul the central factor in the proof of Christ's divinity. And there is no doubt

that Paul believed Christ to be divine in a unique sense—a very God indeed, a Spirit which belonged to the upper heaven, far above the evil spirits dwelling in the atmosphere of the earth, and far above the angels and wonderful beings inhabiting the upper air. Christ had manifested the mysterious powers of supernatural beings. He had healed diseases and thus shown power over demons, he displayed more than human compassion and knowledge, he was able to become invisible to the multitude when danger threatened and had suddenly appeared in the midst of his disciples after his death, while they were together behind closed doors, and at last he had risen bodily from the earth into the clouds of heaven, from which St. Paul expected him to return one day with still greater glory. Last of all Christ had appeared to Paul himself upon the Damascus road, converted him, and commissioned him to go as an ambassador far hence to the Gentiles.

It was not difficult, therefore, for Paul to believe that Christ could actually come

into the hearts of his disciples, shape their desires, mould their wills, and enable them to gain a glorious victory over every form of evil. The means by which Christ could be brought into human beings was by their confessing his all-powerful name. The importance attaching to this name is almost suggestive of magic. "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby you must be saved." At his name finally, in the last judgment-scene "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess him Lord of all." This confession of the name was connected with faith, and faith often had a mystical meaning for the early church, as though it were a power by which the divine favor could be secured. Abraham's faith had counted to him for righteousness, and it was by faith alone that all men could be justified. By this faith Christ entered into the believer and he became at once superior to the evil spirits and to the whole present evil world. This transition from sin and death to righteousness and eternal life, was symbolized, if not finally effected,

by the immersion of the believer into water as into a grave, and by his arising out of it in the likeness of the resurrection of Christ. Thenceforward he became a new creature, and belonged to the heavenly kingdom.

But this side of Paul's teaching concerning the indwelling of Christ in the heart of the believer does not exhaust the meaning of that great conception. This is but the form, of which the substance alone has permanent and vital significance. We may be indifferent to the form except in so far as it enables us to appreciate the apostles' meaning. The belief in spirits as it existed in Paul's day has largely passed away. Demoniacal possession as the explanation of disease has been discarded, and it is no longer held as the cause of immoral conduct. The air about us is not regarded as the abode of the hosts of Satan, and the forces at war in the soul of man are not personified. We no longer look for the good to triumph in our hearts by mysterious means, and the church instead of advanc-

ing miracles as evidences of its claims is curiously enough engaged at times in seeking evidence for the miracles.

In what sense then do we today believe in the indwelling of Christ? Certainly not in the sense that at conversion by the confession of his name and the exercise of faith the literal spirit or ghost of Jesus enters our bodies to dwell there. But rather do we mean that then we commit ourselves unreservedly to his way of life, we try to possess ourselves of his thoughts, his feelings and his ambitions. We seek to have his mind in us, as Paul puts it, a mind of humility, of love, of self-sacrifice. In that way it is possible to have the character, the likeness of Christ developed in human hearts. Paul wrote to the Galatians: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

To have Christ dwelling in the heart means then, beside anything mystical or supernatural, the possession of his will and character in a very matter of fact way. Paul refused to be satisfied with any claim

to the possession of Christ on the part of those who could not show the evidence in their daily lives. He wrote to the Colossians, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. Lie not to one another. Put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; and above all put on charity, and let the peace of God rule in your hearts."

This practical test constitutes the permanent standard by which all men may judge themselves and one another, and determine whether Christ dwells in them. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" The thing by which alone a man may assure himself of the divine presence is not some single religious impulse in the past, or obedience to some outward ordinance, but the continual sense of living the best life of which he is capable. The great denial of Christ is the failure to do one's utmost to live a Christ-

like life. In common speech it is the failure to put all one's energy and thought and ideals into each act of life.

This embodiment or reincarnation of Christ in men, may be freed entirely from the mystical idea that his soul or spirit enters the physical body. It has nothing in common with the belief of Buddhism, for example, which holds that the soul of Buddha enters generation after generation into certain holy men. This belief belongs to an earlier stage of the faith of mankind, and surrounds itself with all manner of seclusion from the actual life of men. It hides its greatest saints away from the struggle and pain of life. The most isolated and mysterious city of the earth was, until recently, the sacred city of Lhasa in the hermit nation of Tibet, in the inner cloisters of which, living ascetic, contemplative life was the highest functionary of the Buddhist faith, believed by his followers to be the reincarnation of the great Buddha, the founder of the religion. Such a religion cannot endure contact with science and with the practical concerns of life.

But the reincarnation of Christ is the formation of a Christ-like character in his disciples, in the midst of all the activities of life, welcoming all knowledge, and all progress as aids in its accomplishment.

This presence of Christ in the heart results in fresh interest, in growth, in freedom and in contentment. The new interest in life which belongs to Christian experience is expressed in the saying that the believer becomes a "new creature, old things are passed away—Behold all things are new." To come into possession of any other man's mind and habit of action, to look out upon the world through another's eyes would be certain to give new interest and meaning to everything. That is precisely the experience we have had when we learned to see the world through the mind of a great astronomer, or geologist, or historian, or philosopher, or poet. There is the same novelty when we view things from the standpoint and with the eye of the world's greatest religious genius. When one sees things as Jesus saw them, they get a vital interest

through the sense of the values which he attached to them. He saw life in a clearer moral perspective than any one who has ever lived. He put highest in the scale those human beings who were possessed of the unselfish ideals of love and who made all else subordinate to them. In comparison with such, those who devoted themselves chiefly to riches or pleasure or fame stood far below. Again it was not the quantity so much as the quality of a man's virtue which gained his approval. The widow giving her mite for a good cause really did more in his sight than those who out of their riches gave large sums. Jesus was not affected by the outward appearance which so easily deceived others, and therefore he estimated men with a fairness and largeness of vision which often reversed the ordinary judgments. Take any one of his great ideas such as humility, love, providence or eternity and look at the world through it. It is like looking through colored lenses. Or better still, it is like using lenses of different convexity. When

you reverse the opera glass, all the objects about you fall away into surprising distances. And when you go into a laughing gallery you are amused at the different forms and proportions under which you appear. The qualities of life which Jesus constantly employed have much the same effect in our estimates of character. They bring into the foreground Lazarus instead of Dives, the widow with her mite instead of the rich men, the innocent child instead of the selfrighteous Scribe, the obscure publican rather than the Pharisee. Through the eye of Jesus one sees no color lines between races of men. The only distinctions are moral and spiritual. One sees none of the titles and ranks and classes of society except those which are founded upon character. What appeared small and remote before has moved into the foreground and become great. The experience of Christian people has often been of this kind, so that they have given up the baubles of pleasure and selfish ease to work for new values which Christ reveals.

To have Christ in one's heart also involves growth. One whose life is all settled so that it involves no problems, no doubts, no aspirations may very well believe that he does not possess Christ. In St. Paul, Christ was an unsettling and disturbing presence, constantly urging him on to larger tasks, exposing him to new dangers, and revealing to him new visions of truth and duty. Christ took him out of Jerusalem into Asia, and from Asia to Europe, from Ephesus to Corinth, and from Corinth to Athens and finally to Rome. He was never suffered to remain long in a place. That divine unrest, that urgency toward other and larger things in his outward life, was accompanied by mental unrest and spiritual struggle. He was ever pressing forward toward the mark of his calling, and anxiously apprehensive lest having saved others he might himself become a cast-away. He constantly urged his converts to grow in grace and knowledge, and the ideal which he set before them was nothing less than the perfect stature of Christ.

He rebuked all signs of indolence, and of false contentment. He urged them to study the scriptures, to stimulate one another by speech and by noble example, and to be always open minded toward the truth. To suppress the deeper questionings of the soul or to refuse to take up new duties because they were strange or difficult, would have been to quench the divine spirit within. Paul consoled himself that with new sufferings and new duties came new strength. "My grace is sufficient for thee" was the assurance by which he went bravely forward, running the race with all his might and fighting all manner of foes.

A third result which comes from the possession of the mind of Christ is freedom. The Christian is free from all external authority. Not even Christ imposes any arbitrary demands upon him. The Christian is not like a boy working a problem in arithmetic and stopping frequently to refer to the rule. The true Christian's conscience and will are so permeated by the spirit of Christ that he

judges for himself whether certain conduct is right. Jesus did not attempt to lay down specific rules. He only insisted on having the heart right, the disposition pure, and the will responsive to the good. When these conditions were present the individual would not go wrong.

This freedom of the Christian is like the freedom of an experienced traveler. He does not have to turn all the while to the maps and directions of a guide book. He moves freely and joyfully among the wonders and upon the highways of the moral life, not because he has discarded the book but because he has its principles in his heart. Or again he is a free citizen of the state, not because he defies the law, but because he fulfills it spontaneously. To be peaceable, and honest and sober belongs to his plan of life. He does not need to trouble himself about the laws pertaining to these things any more than an educated man needs to study the alphabet or the multiplication table. Even where he meets new experiences and undertakes more difficult moral tasks, he pos-

sesses the freedom of the artist who enjoys his work. He exerts himself with a sense of joy and satisfaction, which make him unconscious of fatigue, and which carry him uncomplaining through difficulties and discouragements. Perfect love casts out fear, and a deep trust takes away all anxious thought.

This freedom from worry is one of the greatest charms of the religious life. It is well illustrated in the life of Brother Lawrence, a monk of the seventeenth century. He went into the monastery to punish himself, to make a strenuous and painful sacrifice of himself to God. "I engaged in a religious life only for the love of God," he says, "and I have endeavored to act purely for the love of God." "But God disappointed him, for from that time he met with nothing but satisfaction, and passed his life in perfect liberty and continual joy. He had to do work in the kitchen (to which he had a great aversion) but accustomed himself to do everything there for the love of God, and with prayer upon all occasions

for his grace to do his work well, and had found everything easy during fifteen years that he had been employed there."

It is often in what seem to be the most unfavorable circumstances like these that the presence and power of one's religion appears. Tolstoi illustrates this in his novel "War and Peace." The Russian hero, Peter, is immensely rich, but during Napoleon's invasion is taken prisoner and forced on long marches in the retreat of the French. Suffering all forms of unwonted exposure and privation, he nevertheless "appreciated for the first time, because he was deprived of it, the happiness of eating when he was hungry, of drinking when he was thirsty, of sleeping when he was sleepy and of talking when he felt the desire to exchange some words. In it all, he felt a strange moral calm. He learnt that man is meant for happiness, and this happiness is in him, in the satisfaction of the daily needs of existence and that unhappiness is the fatal result, not of our need, but of our abundance. When calm reigned in the camp, and the embers

paled, and little by little went out, the full moon had reached the zenith. The woods and the fields round about lay clearly visible; and beyond the inundation of light which filled them, the view plunged into the limitless horizon. Then Peter cast his eyes upon the firmament, filled at that hour with myriads of stars. 'All that is mine,' he thought. 'All that is in me, is me! and that is what they think they have taken prisoner. That is what they have shut up in a cabin.' So he smiled, and turned in to sleep among his comrades."

Such experiences as these were familiar to the Apostle Paul. "I have learned" he says, "in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound, everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

The indwelling of Christ, is then, we may conclude, one way of expressing the fact that God is in us, and that he enters

more and more fully as we open our hearts to him. The great test of his presence is no strange experience. It is intensely practical. It is the life we live, and it is capable therefore of objective realization by ourselves and others. Among these moral fruits of the spirit abiding in us, are the Christian's interest in life, his sense of its eternal newness, its refreshing beauty and its inexhaustible resources. The true Christian is also a growing soul, constantly transformed from glory to glory, ever wrestling, battling and winning spiritual victories. And finally the soul possessed by Christ enjoys a freedom and a peace which the world cannot give nor take away,—a serene calm which attends his keenest activity and deepest sorrow—a profound sense that all things work together for good to them that love God.

"How our hearts glowed," the disciples said to each other, "while he was talking to us on the road, and when he explained the Scriptures to us!" Then they got up and returned without loss of time to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven and their companions all together, who told them that the Master had really risen from the grave, and had appeared to Simon. So they related what had happened on their road, and how they had recognized Jesus on his breaking the bread. While they were still talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and greeted them with his blessing.

St. Luke 24:32-36.

VI.

TWO OR THREE AND CHRIST.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

This text has been an inspiration to little groups of Christians ever since the words were spoken. How many times it has been repeated in a poorly attended prayer-meeting! How often it has been the heartening message of the faithful few who were trying to keep up a mission church, or to preserve the forms of worship in an organization many of whose members had been spiritually frost-bitten! Do you not recall your experience as a child, when you had been taken to one of the mid-week meetings of the church? As the gray-haired elder prayed, he seemed to repeat the words of this text both as a kind of challenge for their fulfillment and as an assurance that they were already realized by the actual pres-

ence of Christ. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"—perhaps you cautiously looked about over the bowed heads to see if there were really a heavenly presence added to the earnest company. With more maturity you accepted what was probably the common view, that Christ was there in a spiritual presence, invisible, yet somehow just separated from sight by the thinnest veil through which, as of old, it would be easy for him to appear to the bodily eye. Or you thought of him as far away in another world, yet able to see and hear and share in all that his loyal disciples experienced. How many full-grown men and women have longed for some certain, tangible evidence of that presence. They have prayed and waited and watched. A few have become ecstatic over a vision of Christ granted them in dreams or in hallucinations, but the great majority of normal folk have either given it all up as impossible or have been content with the conviction that since Christ promised it,

the promise must be fulfilled, though mortals may not know how it is accomplished.

I confess that it is with mingled surprise and satisfaction that I have found an unexpected truth and reasonableness in these words, when interpreted in terms of our everyday and matter-of-fact experiences. Indeed, they express in the simplest way the profound truth that religion lives in the vital association and companionship of those who meet together in the interest of great concerns. Let us begin with plain and homely matters. When two or three people meet, even in the most casual manner, something is sure to happen. Strangers just introduced strike fire at once because each finds the other interested in baseball or in politics and discovers that he is on the "right side" in his enthusiasm. Perhaps they have mutual friends, have read the same book, both love music or the drama, or have an interest in aeroplanes or fruit-farms. Any group of Americans are practically certain to warm up with a common emotion over the higher cost of living, or

the jokes of Mark Twain, or the memory of Abraham Lincoln. Wherever people get together, however slight the occasion, there rises in their midst this common factor, this sense of the things they experience as fellow-travelers in the world.

One seldom sits down in a street-car, even where the people are the remotest strangers, without feeling a kind of stirring of instincts deep in his nature. The occupants of the car look him over, with side-glances or with a stare, according to the kind of people they are, and presently they accept him and settle into seeming indifference to his presence. In a half-hour's ride, in spite of the strangeness and the changes of passengers, there begins to form a kind of coagulation of personalities, a certain sense of a company, of a kind of fellow feeling and kinship. The reality and depth of this mood is proved by any slight incident which gives it definite shape and expression. In case of sudden rain, there is a shifting of seats and perhaps an audible complaint about the weather to which everyone inwardly as-

sents, although the regard for "good form" may keep all faces quite rigid and expressionless. Or if a coal wagon has broken down on the track, there is soon a craning of necks, a general wave of depression, and a sort of mutual resentment at the wagon, with a corresponding sense of sympathy for all who suffer together the inconvenience and irritation of the delay.

If this nascent social attitude can germinate under such conditions in so short a time, to what extent may it not develop when noble souls unite their wills in a great service for Christ and the world? It is sometimes a formless and shadowy presence, dissolving with the passing moment, but again it is a presence, majestic, and stable, with a personality dependable and consistent. Where the associations are based upon great concerns and are continued through a long period of time, the common consciousness rises to its most impressive development. It welds together a group of people,—a family, a clan or a race—in devotion to the highest interests. That is the secret of Christian-

ity. It draws men into great tasks, and by virtue of common interests develops in them a spirit of comradeship, of communion and fellowship. Jesus undoubtedly shared this feeling with his disciples. He felt himself one with them in a simple bond of brotherhood and friendship. After his death he was still with them in spirit. His words and his personality lived in their imaginations and in their loyal memories. Where any two or three were together, they talked of him and reminded each other of what he had said, and of how he had lived among them. Their loyalty to him was the strongest bond between them and the strength of that bond was increased by every obstacle they encountered. Their persecutions, imprisonments and chains seemed only to unite them the more closely and to give them a heightened sense of the power and consolation of his spiritual presence.

Now the laws of the inner life do not change in any radical way from age to age. The psychical experiences are the same for us as they were for the imme-

diate disciples of Jesus. The same phenomena constitute the essence of religion now as then, and there is the same sequence in the events of the spiritual world.

The central thing emphasized in the text is the fundamental importance of getting together in the interests of great concerns, gathering together in the name of Christ. "In the name of Christ" here means, in the spirit of Christ, or with the mind of Christ. It cannot mean the union of people under the mere literal name of Christ. It is conceivable that persons might unite under his name and share in no way in his spirit. There is still too much of such superstition in the world, too much shouting of Lord! Lord! and too little doing of his will. To gather together in the name of Christ must be taken to mean meeting in the interest of such things as belong to his spiritual kingdom, meeting in behalf of justice and mercy and truth. It may be a committee on church finances, or an earnest private conversation in which the name of Christ is scarcely mentioned at all, yet there

may be generated that wonderful sense of fellowship in which something more is felt than was present in the separate individuals before they met. The particular things which Christ taught may not be clearly apprehended by the company, but the notion that they are assembled to participate in the great cause with which his name is identified touches each of them, even the least one, with a new importance and value. The plainest little church, of the most ignorant and benighted souls, is somehow transformed by the very fact that they meet under the banner of a mighty cause. They are there thinking, as best they can, of the great theme of the Bible, the redemption of the human race. They feel some share in the vast enterprise and their souls straighten up and expand as they sing:

"I love thy kingdom, Lord!"

A new life wells up within them as they consecrate themselves with the words:

"For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end."

Among the Disciples of Christ alone, there are three or four thousand churches without regular pastors, and yet they meet together every week for a social service and for the observance of the Lord's Supper. The members themselves read the Scriptures, and sing the familiar songs. Some of their number tell personal experiences, confess their own failures, utter their faith, and exhort one another to greater endeavor. Then someone, an older man or one who is a leader because of some talent or education, presides at the communion service. He has come there from his farm or his shop with a sense of responsibility. He is sincerely anxious to honor the service by the best he ca nrender. His personal appearance bears the marks of a thoughtfulness beyond his daily habit. He is to fulfil a sacred office among his fellows and it elevates him by the very power of its asso-

ciations into a somewhat finer being. Likewise all of the participants grow quiet and subdued as they partake of the emblems. The smallness, petty jealousies and selfishness of life seem checked and obliterated by memories of Christ, and there rises in their midst something of his spirit of forgiveness and of generous sympathy. It is no accident, nor mere convention which leads them to sing so often at the close of the service that hymn of fellowship and hope:

> "Blest be the tie that binds
> Our hearts in Christian love:
> The fellowship of kindred minds
> Is like to that above."

There is no place in the world where this spirit of fellowship is so accessible, so spontaneous and overflowing, as in the life of the churches. Fraternal orders possess a measure of it, and just on that account they persist century after century, but they are a select group, secret and exclusive. It is as if they feared, and no doubt wisely, that publicity and utter democracy would dispel the charm of their association. But the church has such a tenacious coherence that it can withstand

any diversity and almost any distraction. Its doors are absolutely open to all comers. Its most sacred ordinances are conducted where any one may see. Men, women and children, saints, sinners and lukewarm souls mingle before her altars and yet her message and her task create on every occasion some glow of reverence and of fellowship. The church is able to cultivate this attitude literally on the street-corners and among the busy throng. Somehow people do not laugh at the Salvation Army. They may not themselves be able to join it or to approve the methods, but there is too much sincerity and earnestness in the Army to allow its street services to become utterly ridiculous. Let us agree then that when people are gathered together in the great cause of human redemption something significant is sure to happen.

Just what happens we may describe still further. There is an increase of personality, an addition of something which was not there before. Emerson called it the Over-Soul, an encircling presence

which seems to surround and flow between two kindred spirits. This something-plus, which appears when two minds meet, is hinted at in the saying that "two heads are better than one." But it has been pointed out that what Christ says is that two heads are better than two. "There still remain the two," says Stanton Coit, "but a third party—not only a mightier, but one different in gifts and qualities—springs into existence. Wherever there are two together, there are always three, and the third is master, by divine right." It is not to be understood that this phenomenon transpires only when just two or three are present, but that this is the lower limit of the experience. That enlargement of horizon, and increment of power which spring from the union of two or three persons in a great task, occurs in still greater measure where there are ten or one hundred. I do not refer merely to the great emotional tension which the crowd begets. That, in itself, may become a mere riot of feeling or intoxication of numbers. But

in well-ordered and rationally controlled assemblies there is an influence which works also for intellectual quickening and for the refinement of moral insight and achievement.

In the history of invention and of other scientific achievements a similar value of association is illustrated. The development of the aeroplane is a familiar illustration. The Wright brothers work not only with each other, but they keep in touch with the history of the mechanical devices akin to any parts of the ones they are building, and inform themselves of all similar experiments in the world. Their results, in turn, are appropriated by others also, and at the present time hundreds of minds are co-operating more or less consciously and intentionally in the realization of the great end, aerial navigation. The union of these minds creates an atmosphere in which each individual is stimulated, disciplined and guided by an intelligence shared in a measure by all, but which is greater than any single mind. It is the same in moral and spiritual con-

cerns. They are not diminished by sharing them with others. On the contrary, the more they are diffused and shared, the more do they grow and flourish, and the more intense becomes the encompassing medium which they create.

If the presence of Christ, then, is more real to assembled individuals than it is to isolated persons,—and this is capable of abundant demonstration,—we may still inquire what is the nature of that presence. Must it be supposed that something comes down from above to fulfill the promise of Jesus made to his disciples, or may we believe that what happens is as natural and normal as anything we experience? Is the Christ who dwells in the midst of our fellowship today identical with the Jesus who lived in Nazareth centuries ago? Is he literally a being who ascended bodily into the heavens? Or is he the Holy Spirit who dwells in our midst whenever we bring our minds and hearts into communion with one another and with the purpose and spirit of the historical Jesus? Jesus promised his dis-

ciples a Comforter, and that Comforter is represented by the apostles as the Holy Spirit. In many passages in the New Testament there is also the doctrine of the Logos, the Word, which is the inner life of the world and the light of men, "that true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

This biblical doctrine of the inner Light is true to the facts of experience. We talk of the crowd-spirit and of group-consciousness. The Group-Spirit is found preëminently in the places of religious work and worship. That Spirit is as real as the Spirit of the market-place, or the Spirit of the Political Party, or the Spirit of Science itself, all of which spirits every one knows to be so real. It is a Spirit which is identified with our most vital and urgent interests. It is not something peculiar to a certain age or limited to some arbitrary gift of the deity. It is rather a direct and natural expression of our deepest experiences, of those experiences in which we quicken each other and gen-

erate through our fellowship, a common consciousness which is somehow larger and wiser and more gracious than any one of us, or than all of us when separate and alone.

There is no more of mystery here than in our commonest work. When a few of us sit together as a committee of our school or club or business, there is at once a sense of control of all merely individual judgments. We often record what we call "the sense of the meeting." We almost instinctively put forward our private thoughts with a sense of their meagreness. When they occurred to us beforehand, in solitude, they seemed so adequate and clear. But now our words meet that over-arching personality before whom they must be tested. Or, our scared and frightened little self receives a great expansion and encouragement by the endorsement of the larger social self. Then we rejoice and take courage. It is here also that we feel ourselves to be in most immediate and vital relation with the sources of power. We are face to

face with the original fountains of wisdom and strength. In religious fellowship of this kind we are not merely repeating what some one else has discovered, we are not dependent upon any priest or mediator. Ours is then a faith, such as George Eliot describes:

> a faith
> Taught by no priest, but by our beating hearts:
> Faith to each other; the fidelity
> Of men whose pulses leap with kindred fire,
> Who in the flash of eyes, the clasp of hands,
> Nay, in the silent bodily presence, feel
> The mystic stirrings of a common life
> That makes the many one."

The same reverence for this capacity of every individual to share in and to contribute to the spiritual life is expressed in these lines of Walt Whitman:

> "Painters have painted their swarming groups,
> and the center figure of all,
> From the head of the center figure spreading a
> nimbus of gold-colored light;
> But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head
> without its nimbus of gold-colored light.
> From my hand, from the brain of every man and
> woman it streams, effulgently flowing forever.
> Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you,
> that you be my poem.

I will leave all, and come and make the hymns
of you.
None has understood you, but I understand you;
None has done justice to you—you have not done
justice to yourself;
None but has found you imperfect; I only find no
imperfection in you;
None but would subordinate you; I only am he
who will never consent to subordinate you;
I only am he who places over you no master, or
owner, or better, or God, beyond what awaits
intrinsically in yourself."

"From the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing forever"—this stream of light flowing from the myriads of heads assembled in the great cause of human welfare, is the spirit of the group. It is the Holy Spirit of our divinest and loftiest companionships. We cannot be too reverent toward it. We need constantly its baptism and its communion. And above all, we must accept its instruction and its guidance. To deny or reject this Holy Spirit is the greatest of sins. It is the denial of one's larger self, the rejection of the living oracles of God.

This comradeship of noble endeavor is the upper realm where Christ meets his

disciples most intimately. He appears in such a fellowship when all outer doors are closed. That is the fascination and bewitchment of spiritual enterprises. They accomplish objective and tangible results, but they also bring the sense of divine companionship. They make men conscious of being co-workers with God.

It is in this experience that the most convincing evidences of religion live. The adventures of faith confirm the hearts of those engaged in them, and they bear irresistible witness to the world. There is always something lacking in theoretical proofs. They are at best only partial embodiments of the living reality, but the concerted action of Christian men, aglow with the enthusiasm of an unselfish, holy cause possesses the full measure of reality. Whenever they meet to counsel for some noble end; whenever they express in forms of worship the toil and warfare, the tragedy and triumph of man's redemption, there cluster about them a mighty cloud of witnesses and within their midst rises the majestic and gracious

figure of Christ. In such moments there is an increment of life, a new measure of comfort and inspiration.

The great hymns of fellowship and communion have their power and meaning in this fact. They proclaim that spiritual comradeship brings strength and succor for every need. Even two or three, welded together in such fellowship, gain thereby that other presence. That is the quickening message which rings in the depths of Clough's great "Hymn of Fellow-help":

When the enemy is near thee,
In our hands we will upbear thee:
He shall neither scathe nor scare thee,
He shall fly thee and shall fear thee.
Call on us!

Call when all good friends have left thee,
Of good sights and sounds bereft thee;
Call when hope and heart are sinking,
When the brain is sick with thinking:
Help, O help!

When the panic comes upon thee,
Hope and choice have all foregone thee,
Fate and force are closing o'er thee,
And but one way stands before thee,
Call on us!

Oh, if thou dost not call,
Be but faithful, that is all.
Go right on, and close behind thee
There shall follow still and find thee
Help, sure help.

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Am36

Ames, E.S.

The divinity of Ch...

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